



**Governor's Proposed Budget FY18-FY-19
Appropriations Hearing: Department of Housing
Friday, February 17, 2017**

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Housing to support our efforts to end homelessness in CT.

I am here today to ask you to please preserve the Department of Housing Homeless Services Line Item as it stands in the Governor's budget at \$73.7 million and \$78.3 million in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 respectively. I do recognize that Connecticut is currently in a position of significant financial hardship. However, when we take people off the streets into shelters, and move them from the shelters into permanent housing options we are saving the State and our taxpayers money. Services these households would otherwise use, such as emergency departments, inpatient detox and recovery programs and jails, are incredibly expensive services.

I am the Deputy Director at Journey Home in Hartford, the agency tasked with ending homelessness in our State's Capitol region. We have made great strides towards this goal as a community thanks in large part to the commitment from the current administration and general assembly. The services included in the budget line item I mentioned above are critical components to the streamlined Coordinated Access Network systems we have worked hard over the last several years to design and implement which are housing our community's most vulnerable households.

We were the first state in the nation to end chronic homelessness for veterans in our state, and are one of only three states have ended homelessness among veterans. We have had four consecutive years showing decreases in our total homeless population. We have proven that our approach and our programs work.

In Greater Hartford alone, as of today, we have 228 individual men, 258 individual women and 93 families with children waiting for shelter beds. On the other side, we currently have 70 individuals that we believe are chronically homeless who will need housing in the very near future and about 11 newly identified individuals becoming chronically homeless each month. RAP vouchers paired with services funded by the federal government and by the State Department of mental health make up a significant percentage of our permanent supportive housing stock. In the last two years, we have housed over 300 chronically homeless households in the capitol region, a decrease of over 50%. Nearly one third of these 300 chronically homeless individuals have been housed using Rental Assistance Program Vouchers. Without these resources we will certainly lose most of the positive gains we have made in the last few years.

I also urge you to support the 2.3 million allocation for the Homeless Youth Program as it stands in the Governor's budget. As we transition from our goals to focus on ending youth and family homelessness the homeless outreach, housing and service dollars under this line item are going to be critical to being about to ensure a safe home for all of our families and youth. This population has very different and specific needs from others experiencing homelessness and it important to have programs tailored to these needs.

Another vital component to the success we have experienced is the Community Investment Act funding. This funding has allowed for coordinating staff in regions across the state. These staff are ensuring that agencies are working in collaboration to tackle the injustice of homelessness. This funding is the reason we have data

255 Main St., 2nd Floor Hartford, CT 06106-5310
Phone: 860-808-0336 Fax: 860-461-1662
Journeyhomect.org

and numbers that I mentioned above. Systems like the Coordinated Access Networks that have been allowing us to make unprecedented progress in ending homelessness will not experience such success without this important staffing resource. I ask that you please protect the CIA investment as it stand in the Governor's budget.

We envision a world in which homelessness is rare, brief and non-reoccurring and we have the tools and knowledge to get there with your continued support. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,
Amanda Girardin
Deputy Director

